

Civil War Letters of Thomas Reynolds Aldrich (1840-1908), Co. B,
154th New York Volunteer Infantry, to his mother, Susan Brown
Aldrich Curtis of Mill River, Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

(Elias and Anna, mentioned frequently, were T.R.A.'s brother
and sister.)

(Courtesy of Patricia Wilcox, Fairport, New York, T.R.A.'s
great-granddaughter.)

Camp James M. Brown
Sept 17th/62

Dear Mother

I received your kind and welcome letter yesterday I was verry glad to hear from you it was not directed right and it did not come to camp with the rest of the letters I went to town yesterday and Inquired for me and got it they do not let only one man out of each company to go to town evry day we are about a mile from the village all of the way down hill I have been here five weeks yesterday have been to versailles twice I dont much expect to go again as I think that we leave here for washington next week I have Just been out drilling it is verry warm here to day I came from versailles a week ago to day was sick all of the afternoon have been well ever since I come over except that camp life agrees with me first rate I think that I shall stand it if my lungs do not give out they are rather weak but I am in hopes that drilling will help them I was surprised to hear that Elias had enlisted again I did not expect that he would go into the service again I have writen to him since I have enlisted I have writen to anna too but have not received any answer yet and do not expect to for I have writen to her twice before and she did not condesend to answer them I am verry sorry that her health is so poor I would like to see her before I go but it can not be If I ever get another furlough I will try to get one long enough to come and see you for I want to see you verry much indeed uncle Elisha folks are all well Mrs halls health is verry poor I dont think that she will live through another winter most of all the young men have enlisted out of versailles I thought some of getting married before I went away but made up my mind that I would wait untill I come back if I ever do I hope that we shall leave here next week for I want to get away from here as quick as we can you must write to me as often as you can and I will keep you informed where I am Our company has come back from dinner and we shall be called out for drill and I must close with much love I remain your Efectionate son,

T. R. Aldrich

PS you must Direct your letters to Camp James M. Brown Jamestown
Chatauqua County New York Care of D. B. Allen Captain one hundred
and fifty forth regiment

Camp Seward Oct 6th 1862

Dear Mother

It is the sixth day of october and I am 22 to day and I am laying in my tent writing to my mother we are encamped on Arlington heights six miles from washington with thousands of soldiers camped all around us as far as the eye can reach there is nothing to be seen but the white tents of soldiers and there is lots of forts in sight there is about two hundred thousand men encamped within two miles of here we came here last thursday night about nine o clock at night tired and hungry laid down on the ground and slept all night with out any thing to eat we had been up three nights without sleep and we could sleep anywhere my health has been good untill to day I did not feel verry well so I did not go with the regiment they went about two miles from here to be inspected by the presedent I shall be all right tomorrow I have writen to Anna since I have been here and expect a letter from her before long I supposed that you received my letter with my picture it was not a verry good one it was a miserable place where I had it taken and a poor artist I expect I am not far from Elias if I knew the number of his regiment and where he was camped I could go and see him I wish that you would write to me and tell me where he was this is a hard looking country I can tell you there is nothing left here not a fence nor hardly a house I went down to the river yesterday to see some friends that was in another regiment had a good visit and a bath in the potomac you ought to see the long bridge acrossed the river at washington it is about a mile long and is a splendid thing I am going to write to aunt marian to day if I get time I have not time to write more at present write soon and Oblige your effec-
tionate Son T.R.A.

PS Direct to washington D.C. 154 regiment of New York volunteers
Company B T.R. Aldrich

Fairfax Oct 28th/62

Dear Mother

I received your kind And motherly letter this morning And was verry glad to hear from you I have been expecting a letter from you for some time and my hopes were fulfilled this morning but I hope that you wont borrow any trouble about me for I am well and healthy and stand it first rate have enought to eat and a fair place to sleep I have Just got a fire place in my tent to day and shall be comfortable as a kitten we are under general Sigle near the rebble lines but I have not seen one yet the news are this morning that Mcclenen has got betwene the rebbles and richmond and we expect that we shall have a chance at them before long I want to get one good clip at them and then I am willing to go home I have not heard from anna since I came from york state I have writen to her but have not received an answer yet but am looking for one evry day I have not heard from Elias yet for certain I think that I know the regiment and company I am going to write to him this afternoon and find out I think that he is in the 123 regt. company E. that regiment is from washington county and the company from North Eastern if that is so I will hear from him and write you I have not had a letter from uncle Elishas folks since I left but I receive letters evry day from some of the young ladies I got one this morning the same time I did yours but I read my Mothers first you must be sure and write to me often for I may be where I can not write to you but a letter will reach me directed as before where ever I may be Now mother dont worry about me for I am all right and think that I shall continue to be so we have got good company and a good captain and we have got as good a regt as old New York ever turned out that picture that I sent you was not a good one of me it was not near as good looking as the original if I do say it but it was the best that I could get then I hope that your health is good you must not worry about me for I shall come and see you and stay a spell when I get out of this the news has Just come that we have got to go to centerville tomorrow but I dont believe it but I hope that it is so for I had rather move again than to stay here the weather here is fine nice fall weather Neither warm nor cold but verry cold nights but I have written a rather long letter and will close with by signing myself your Effectionate Son

T. R. Aldrich

PS give my regards to Mr. Curtice

T.R.A.

Thorofare Gap Nov 10th/62

Dear mother

It is with great pleasure that I take my pen to write to my mother the only person in all this wide world except one that cares aught for me perhaps you would like to know where I am at the present time I am out on picket at thorofare gap seated on a piece of timber before a large camp fire trying to enjoy myself as well as I know how and I make out verry well considering the place that I am in we have to guard the generals quarters we have orders to march tomorrow where we go I do not know some say that we go to Frederic toward richmond I hope so for I want to go ahead instead of back I am anxious to have this thing closed up and I want a chance to do something for it we have marched all over the country already and I have been verry healthy I have got a slight cold now shall get over it in a few days you would not know me I am black as an indian and as nasty as a person can well be and still live but I can not bear to be as nasty as some of the boys are my greatest companion is my pipe I have become an inveterate Smoker since I came in the army could not get along without my pipe our men caught two hundred rebble cavaly last night the same that made that raid into pennselvania a pretty good haul they were sent to washington I do not know when this thing will be settled up I hope it will be before long for I am ready to go home I have seen the lion and am ready to leave but I expect to have to help take richmond I have not heard from Elias yet I expect that he passed within a mile of where we were camped about a week ago I think that he was about nine miles of me yesterday could not go and see if this war is wound up this winter I shall come and see you the first thing that I do I do not know when I shall send this for I have not got a stamp and cant get them for love or money if I dont send this before we leave I will write more from your effectionate son

T.R. Aldrich

Camp near Germantown
Nov 21st/62

Dear Mother you see by this that we have moved again and instead of forward we have gone back we started monday and got here last night it has rained evry night since we started and all night last night and all day to day and we have nothing but little thin tents that the water runs through I received a letter from Elias to night and one from aunt marian Elias says he is sick you can write to him washington D.C. 123 regt. N.Y.S.V Company I the folks were all well at Versailles _____ sent me a lot of postage stamps I have not been verry well for a week past caught cold and settled on my lungs cough most all the time I guess that I shall get better after a little but I have not room to write more write soon and oblige from your son

T.R. Aldrich

Friday Morning Nov 22nd

I feel a good deal better this morning I guess I shall be all right to morrow dont worry on my account respect to Mr. curtice good by T.R. Aldrich
It rained all night and rains now guess that it is going to rain all winter TRA

Camp Near Fredericksburg
Jan. 7th/63

Dear Mother I received your letter last night and was verry glad to hear from you for I had not heard from you in some time I wrote to you the day before I left Fairfax but your letter was dated the 16 and 21 of December so that it must be that it was delayed on the road I wrote to you the other day but thought I would write again and let you know that I was well and in good health and never was healthier in my life I like it first rate so far I have never been homesick a day since I was in the army we was not in the battle for we did not get here time enough on account of the roads they were verry mudy we are right in sight of the rebs we are not half a mile from the river and they are right on the other side we are detached from the regt to support a battery so that we are about half way between I can see the citty and battle ground from my tent you need not worry about me for I have got a good tent with a fire place in it have enough to eat and to wear I have a chance to draw all the clothes I want it is rather cold and I am seated before the fire as warm and comfortable as you please I think that I shall stand it for I am the toughest man in our Company we have got the best company that there is in the regt the largest and the least sickness of any of them now I dont want you to worry about me for I have always been used to take care of myself and I ought to know how by this time there is not much danger of being sick if they keep themselves clean and fix their tents up as they ought to be I sleep as warm as I ever did at home I have not heard from Elias since I wrote you he was well the last I heard I have not had a letter from anna in a long time I dont know what the reason is I would like to know what the matter is but I have got to go out and drill an hour and a half and then I will finish this well I have been out and we have drilled two hours and I have taken my pen to finish this letter I was verry glad to get those stamps for I was out and could not get one to write to any one I have not had but one letter from uncle Elishas folks since I left there but hear from them occasionally they are all well huckerboom that used to live there is Captain of Co. K he has been home he came back the other day he said the folks were all well Mrs Halls health is verry poor I dont think she will stand it a great while I can not think of much more to write this time write often and I will do the same my respects to Mr. Curtice and love to yourself from your Son

T. R. Aldrich
Co. B, 154. Regt

Camp Near Falmouth Va Feb
1st/63

Dear Mother

I received your kind and welcome letter several days since and was verry glad to hear from you your letter found me enjoying good health and enjoying myself as well as if we wernt so near the rebbles I expected to have been in a fight before this and should if the weather had been favorable the whole army was in motion and our regt was in front but there was a rain came up and made the roads so muddy that the artillery could not move or the pontoon train could not get to the river to lay the bridges so that we could not cross I am sorry for I think that we would have whiped them this time we are now encamped about a mile from our old camp in the mud I have been off on detached service a week and I just got back to camp yesterday and have not got my tent up yet but will tomorrow if nothing happens I had rather a tough time when we were on the march out in the rain two nights and one day without a wink of sleep and the next day marched six miles through the mud half way to our knees but it did not hurt me a bit I am just as well as ever I have wrote to Versailles for a box with a pair of boots and some other traps in that I expect in a few days I got a letter from anna the other day and answered it she was well for her I hope she will get well I have not heard from Elias in a good while I dont know who he is under never fear but this rebellion will be put down our armies are victorious farther south and as soon as the roads will admit and the weather gets settled we shall try them here again and I feel confident that we shall whip them I am well and enjoy myself dont worry about me for I am all right write soon and beleave me your Effectionate Son

T. R. Aldrich

PS give my regards to Mr. Curtise yours in haste T.R.A.

Camp Near Stafford C.H.
March 28th/63

Dear Mother

it is a rainy day and I have taken my pen to write a few lines to you I wrote to you not long since but I suppose that letters from the seat of war are always execptable therefore I have taken this oppertunity to write to you again We are still encamped where we were when I wrote you before and I cant see much signs of our leaveing for one day it will be fair and warm and the next it will rain and storm like the verry devil yesterday I went over to see Elias it was a warm pleasant day and the mud dried up so that it was verry good traveling but it has rained almost all night and the roads are in an awful condition again and we cant move untill the roads are in good order so that artillery can move Elias was well his health is a good deal better than it was he is fat and feels well he weighs 170 pounds and I 168 so you see that I am almost as heavy as he is and I can stand twice the hardships that he can we got the news last night that eight thousand of our troops had crossed the river at fredericksburgh and a couple of batteries but I dont place much confidence in the report I hope that it is so and the rebs have evacuated the fortifications in front of the citty I think that we have a man at the head of the army of the potomac that will succeed if he has a chance at least I hope that they will let him alone long enough to give him a chnace there is lots of rumers of our being nine months men but I dont place much confidence in the report I think that we shall either go to washington to do provost duty or to fortress Monroe when we move I dont care much where we go if it only helps the government to put down this cursed rebellion I would not give a snap to get out of this untill our country is once more united in the bonds of piece and brotherly love I came down here to protect the government in this her time of peril and I mean to stand by her to the last if fall she must I go with her but I do not prophisy any such result I think that this springs campaign will settle the question we have them on all sides and if we do not succeed it will not be the fault of the brave soldiers but their leaders you will know by the length of this letter that I am well and enjoying excelent health and I hope that this will find you the same give my best respects to Mr. curtis write soon and oblige your son

T. R. Aldrich

Camp Manly, April 10th/63

Dear Mother

I received your kind and welcome letter day before yesterday and was verry glad to hear from you and hasten to reply although I cant write a verry long letter for I have got to go out on a grand inspection and review by Gen Hooker and the President so I thought I would write and let you know we are still in the old camp and well I dont think we shall stay here a great while longer before we move I have seen Elias once since I wrote you he was well I dont think that we shall have to stay here another winter for the rebs cant hold out till that time they are on the poin of starvation the wommen and children rose en mass in Richmond and attacked the stores and comisary department and the Provost guard could not put them down and Jeff. Davis had to come forward and promise them rations to support them I tell you when the wommen and children begin to call for bread they cant hold out much longer we have got their supplies cut off so that they have to live on their own recources and that they cant do our fleet has attacked Charlestown and we wait for news from there with anxiety I hope we shall triumph and I think we shall I received a letter from versailles the other night stating that Mrs. Hall was dead and buried it is verry sickly around there this winter more so than it is in the army I dont believe that Elias will get his discharge he dont want to leave as long as he is well and I wouldnt if I was him there is no news from this quarter only the regular routine of Picket And guard duty and then lay around camp the rest of the time well I cant think of much more to write this time therefore I will bid you good by untill next time write soon and oblige

T. R. Aldrich

Second Division Hospital,
May 6th 1863

Dear Mother

I presume that you have heard of the great battle that is _____
her between our army and the rebs. The fight commenced last Friday.
We were engaged Saturday Night about sundown. For the first our regt
fought like tigers and were all cut to pieces. I got hit three times
once on the wrist once on the knee and the last through the thigh.
The two first did not hurt me any and the other is a flesh wound.
I can walk with a cane. I have walked ten or fifteen miles it is an
awful fight I dont know how it will end but the general opinion is
that we shall whip them hard. I do not know wether Elias is safe or
not. I have enquired but could not hear anything from him. I hope
he is all right. I shall be in a month or so. I tell you we had a
hard place in the fight. The troops broke and run over us we lay in
the breast works our regt was the last that retreated and the rebs
wernt four rods from me when I left and not a dozen men of our regt
but what had retreated as I was going to the woods I was shot through
the leg. We have been shelled out of the hospital but we are now
where they cant shell us I have seen enough of this war and hope
that they will win it this time. I am satisfied with what I have got
now. We have not been where we could send or get letters in four
weeks or I should have written to you before. I dont want you to
worry about me for I am in a good place the best bed I have had since
I came in Virginia feel well only a little lame shall be well in a
little while give my respect to Mr Curtice I will write as soon as
I hear from Elias. Write soon and oblige your son.

T.R. Aldrich

Direct to Washington D.C.
Second Division, 11 Corps
Hospital Near Brooks Station Va.

Carver Hospital May 22nd/63

Well Mother

I have taken my pen to write to you again to let you know that I am getting along well the only trouble is it is hot as the devil and almost roasts me laying around here my wound is healed pretty much up I can get around first rate if it want so hot I dont know but I shall get a furlough for thirty days but aint sure there is a good many getting them I dont care much but I would like to go home I have got a note against a man that I dont know as I shall get if I aint there it is over a hundred dollars so it is worth looking after I would like to come and see you and will if I get a thirty day furlough that is if you will write and tell me where I change cars at Albany or Troy and what road I take to reach you and the nearest station to your house now I aint sure as I can come but if I get a furlough I will I am going down to the citty to morrow to look over the Public buildings I have not heard from Elias yet I have not got a letter from any one yet the rest of the boys here have got two or three why cant you write it makes me mad to think I cant get a letter under four or five weeks after writing write as soon as you receive this give my respects to the old Gentleman and oblige your Son

T. R. Aldrich

May 29th/63

I have Just received a letter from Elias he is all right which I am glad to hear I was sick all night last night the first time I have been sick since I have been in the army I am all right to day the weather is warm and I almost roast give my respects to Mr. Curtise write soon and oblige your son

T. R. Aldrich

Direct to T. R. Aldrich
Carver Hospital
Washington, D.C.

Carver Hospital June 17th/63

Dear Mother

I received your last letter a few days ago I had just written to you or I should have answered before but as I had nothing to pass away the time I thought I would write to you again and let you know that I am well that is as physically my wound is not quite Healed yet but is doing well I have not heard from Elias but once yet I dont know what to think I suppose that his Regt is in motion again I pity him these Hot days it is verry hot the whole army is in motion again and there will be a big fight before long I expect Elias will be in it I hope he will come out all right again I wish I was in the same regt with Him but cant Help it now I expect a furlough next week if nothing Happens but I shall have to go to Versailles for I have sent all my money home I dont know wether I shall come to see you or not I will if I can I would like to meet anna there if I did come I should have only thirty days leave it will take three days to go, & three days to come that will be six days in all then it would three days to go down where you live I should not have a great while to stay perhaps I shall not get a furlough but I am pretty sure of one you may direct your next letter to Versailles at any rate for I think I shall be there I will write you if I hear from Elias my respects to Mr. curtise.

T. R. Aldrich

Carver Hospital June 22nd/63

Dear Mother

I received your kind & welcome letter yesterday and was verry glad to hear from you and hasten to reply though not knowing hardly what to write worth reading only that my health is good never better my wound is not healed yet the doctor says I have walked around on my leg to much I can get around without hurting me much so I keep going it will get well after a while the greatest trouble is amy blood is out of order you know it always was I have not heard from elias But once since I have been here the army is now down near Bull Run battle ground there was quite a heavy fight yesterday between our cavalry and Artillery and the rebs cavalry and artillery our forces gained the day I could hear the cannon verry plain there will be a heavy battle between our army & the rebs before many days I wish I was there I would pay them for this wound they gave me I believe I more than paid them at Chancellorsville. I am pretty sure I laid out three of their men for I took good aim and they dropped I wish I could have killed a hundred a fellow dont feel Scart a bit my motto is keep cool take good aim and fetch a man evry time I wish I was with Elias through this fight but it is impossible the weather is some cooler then it was when I wrote to you before we have had a fine rain and it is much cooler I received a letter from Uncle Elisha the other day his health is poor I tell you mother he is hard up also I got a letter from Levi they was all well you know Alexander Hurd he married Mary Jane Stetwell last fall she died last winter so he is a young widower only a month older than I am I am glad I aint married If I go home I will send you my intendeds picture so you can see what you think of her I have it with me but dont want to part with it now till I know wether I go home or not I dont know where Uncle Simeon is I have not heard from him in a year give my respects to Mr. Curtice dont write till you receive another letter from me for I may go home in a day or two from your son

T. R. Aldrich

Carver Hospital July 28th/63

Dear Mother

I have at last returned to the Hospital and hasten to write to you I came back yesterday morning my health is first rate weigh 30 pounds more than I did when I left my wound is not well yet it is worse in fact than it was when I left for home but I am not lame any to amount to any thing I have been all over the citty to day can walk verry well I think it will heal in a short time now I heard that Elias was in the Hospital at Frederick citty Maryland while I was coming through on the cars I shall write to him in a day or two I dont think he is wounded at liest I hope not Uncle Elishas folks are well also willises & pierces & Mr. & Mrs. Hills I did not see Avies folks while I was there the rest of the folks were all well I have not got time to write much this time write soon & oblige your Son

T. R. A.

United States General
Hospital, "Carver,"
Washington, D.C. August 9th
1863.

Dear Mother

I have just received your kind & welcome letter & hasten to reply as soon as I can it found me well and Healthy never felt to well in my life my wound is almost healed up you need not worry about Elias for he is all right he is in the Harewood Hospital the other day I lay on my bed when who should come in but Elias and his wife you can bet I was glad to see them he is about as he was last winter he never will go back to the Regt again I went to see him yesterday was with him most all day he says he feels first rate but cant march on account of that rupture I think he has got a verry pretty wife She has gone home again I heard yesterday that our Corps were Embarking on board Transports to go to New Orleans to reenforce Banks or to Charlestown to Join Gilmore I shall be there in two weeks if that is so I hate to go there this hot weather _____ it is hot enough here & it dont commence with the weather down there but I shall have to go where the regt does that is as soon as I get well which will be before long if I go I shall have a chance to see the country that will pay Mother I have made up my mind that I am coming out of this all right I dont believe I shall leave my bones here in this heathen country I have not received any letters till to day since I got back from my Lady love with yours recd my mothers first of course _____ mother dont worry about me or Elias for we will try to take care of ourselves I hope that he wont go back again for he has got a wife & child to take care of. it would not be so bad for me to fall for I have not got any body to look to me for support which I am verry glad of time enough after the war is over to think of marrying I shant marry till I am 30 at liest that is just the right age get steady by that time I am a wild fellow the old steady ones say in Versailles but I mean well so it is just as well as if I was steady write soon & oblige your son,

Tom